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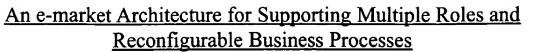
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for allowing flexible creation and alteration of business processes within a commerce system includes using state machines to describe the actions that can be taken by particular roles at particular points in a process. The state machines are used by a commerce system to enforce validity of user actions, to track the execution of actions within an instance of the business process, to provide the user interface with a list of actions available to a user working on an instance of the business process, to provide coordination between state machines, and to allow different organizations to have varied business processes.